

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 VIENTI 02960 01 OF 02 120540Z

13/45

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 IO-14 DPW-01 DRC-01 SR-02

ORM-03 /165 W

----- 053915

R 111157Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8540

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

CDR JCRC

USSAG/7AF

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 2960

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA SIX)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: FIRST CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER

1. I PAID MY FIRST CALL ON DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND  
FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUMI VONGVICHIT (PATHET LAO) TODAY.  
OUR TALK WAS CORDIAL AND FRANK, AND HE WAS EXQUISITELY  
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PAGE 02 VIENTI 02960 01 OF 02 120540Z

COURTEOUS. WE COVERED A BROAD RANGE OF TOPICS INCLUDING

THE POW/MIA QUESTION.

2. AFTER SOME CONVENTIONAL COURTESIES ABOUT OUR RESPECTIVE FAMILIES HAD BEEN EXCHANGED, I MENTIONED PRESIDENT NIXON'S LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER EXTENDING THE GOOD WISHES OF THE USG TO THE PGNU AND STATED THAT I WISHED TO ADD MY OWN EXPRESSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP AND GOOD-WILL ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES. I EXPRESSED OUR DESIRE TO MAINTAIN A CLOSE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PGNU AND NOTED THAT WE HAD WORKED ACTIVELY IN RECENT MONTHS TO HELP BRING ABOUT RECONCILIATION AND THE FORMATION OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT. PHOUMI REPLIED THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WAS EXTREMELY ANXIOUS TO MAINTAIN CLOSE TIES WITH UNITED STATES AND HE PERSONALLY WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO WORKING WITH ME IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF FRIENDSHIP AND CANDOR. THE WAR HAD CAUSED A GREAT DEAL OF DESTRUCTION AND HARDSHIP, AND LAOS WOULD NEED HELP FROM MANY COUNTRIES AND EXPECIALLY THE GREAT POWERS IN THE TASK OF RECONSTRUCTION. I SAID THAT WE HAD TODAY RECEIVED A LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE SUBJECT WHICH I HAD CABLED TO WASHINGTON AND THAT IT WAS OUR INTENTION TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AS WE HAD IN THE PAST, SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL BY CONGRESS OF THE NECESSARY LEGISLATION. IN THIS CONNECTION, I SAID THAT CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES MIGHT WELL BE AFFECTED BY THE MANNER IN WHICH THE POW/MIA PROBLEM WAS RESOLVED AND MENTIONED THAT THE EMBASSY HAD ALREADY RECEIVED MANY LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS FROM CONCERNED INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS.

3. PHOUMI SAID THAT HE TOO HAD RECEIVED MANY MESSAGES ON THIS SUBJECT AND THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED IT MANY TIMES IN THE PAST WITH CHARGE DEAN. HE HAD TOLD MR. DEAN THAT DURING WAR TIME IT WAS DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, TO GET INFORMATION. NOW THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS FORMED, HE EXPECTED TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE US WITH INFORMATION IN THE FUTURE. I ASKED WHETHER EMMET KAY MIGHT BE RELEASED IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT HE WOULD LET ME KNOW AS SOON AS A DECISION HAD BEEN REACHED.

SECRET

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PAGE 03 VIENTI 02960 01 OF 02 120540Z

4. I SAID TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER THAT I WISHED TO AFFIRM TO HIM THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD COMPLY SCRUPULOUSLY WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE AGREEMENT AND PROTOCOL AND THAT THE DEPARTURE OF SOME AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL HAD ALREADY BEGUN. PHOUMI SAID THAT FOR THE FUTURE TRANQUILITY AND WELL-BEING OF LAOS, IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT ALL FOREIGN SOLDIERS LEAVE THE COUNTRY. I NOTED THERE HAD ALREADY BEEN A VERY SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION OF

U.S. AIR CONTRACT PERSONNEL. PHOUMI SAID THAT HE HAD DEALT VERY OPENLY AND FRANKLY WITH JOHN DEAN AND HE LOOKED FORWARD TO WORKING CLOSELY WITH ME. THERE WERE ALWAYS RUMORS REGARDING AMERICAN POLICY AND HE HAD DISCUSSED THESE VERY OPENLY WITH DEAN IN THE PAST. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO SAID THE AMERICANS WERE AGAINST THE FORMATION OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT AS IT WOULD INEVITABLY LEAD TO A COMMUNIST TAKE-OVER. IN HIS VIEW, THERE WERE TWO POLITICAL VIEWPOINTS IN THE COUNTRY AND THE LAO PEOPLE SHOULD WORK CALMLY AND AMICABLY TOWARDS RECONCILING THEM. THERE WERE ALSO RUMORS THAT AMERICANS WERE NOT REALLY LEAVING LAOS BUT WERE LURKING IN THAILAND. HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE UNITED STATES, WHICH HAD WITHDRAWN ITS FORCES FROM VIETNAM, WOULD ENGAGE IN CHICANERY OF THIS KIND.

5. I REPLIED THAT THERE WERE INDEED MANY RUMORS IN VIENTIANE AND THAT I HOPED HE WOULD BRING ALLEGATIONS REGARDING MY COUNTRY AND ITS POLICIES TO MY ATTENTION. I CITED THE NEW YEAR'S ALERT WHICH HAD BEEN CAUSED BY A CHRISTMAS PARTY AT UDORN AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE KIND OF MISINFORMATION WHICH COULD CAUSE DIFFICULTIES. WITH REGARD TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT, I COMMENTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN OCCASIONS IN THE WEST IN WHICH THE LEFTIST PARTICIPANTS IN THE COALITION HAD ACHIEVED DOMINATION OVER THE OTHER SIDE. I EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT MODERATION AND GOOD SENSE WOULD ASSURE A PEACEFUL EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL PROBLEMS HERE.

6. PHOUMI SAID THAT HE HOPED THAT THE ADVENT OF REAL PEACE WOULD PERMIT THE RETURN OF REFUGEES TO THEIR HOMES AND SAID HE HOPED THAT LAOS WOULD RECEIVE ASSISTANCE IN RESETTLING THESE FAMILIES. I REPLIED THAT WE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 VIENTI 02960 01 OF 02 120540Z

TOO HOPED THAT REFUGEES WOULD RETURN TO THEIR ORIGINAL HOMES AND THAT IN THE MEANTIME UNITED STATES WOULD CONTINUE TO ASSIST THEM. WE WERE ALSO PREPARED TO ASSIST IN THEIR RESETTLEMENT. PHOUMI SAID THAT THESE PEOPLE SHOULD NOT BE FORCED TO STAY WHERE THEY WERE NOR SHOULD THEY BE FORCED TO MOVE. THERE WAS A STRONG DESIRE AMONG THEM, HOWEVER, TO RETURN TO THEIR NATIVE HEATH. UNFORTUNATELY, THE COUNTRY WAS STILL DIVIDED INTO ZONES BUT THE LPF WOULD DO WHAT IT COULD TO ASSIST THEM IN ITS ZONE, AND, AT THE SAME TIME, THEY WOULD NEED HELP FROM

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 02960 02 OF 02 111323Z

43

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 2960

ABROAD. THEIR VILLAGES WERE DESTROYED AND THERE WERE UNEXPLODED BOMBS IN THEIR RICE PADDIES. I NOTED THAT WE HAD HAD EOD TEAMS HERE HELPING DEFUSE ORDNANCE AND MIGHT HELP IN THIS FIELD. PHOUMI SAID THAT THE LPF NOW HAD PEOPLE WHO KNEW ABOUT DEFUSING BOMBS. (COMMENT: THIS WAS RATHER VAGUE AND THERE WAS THE IMPLICATION THAT AID WOULD BE REQUESTED BY THE LPF FOR REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT. I DID NOT PROBE INTO THIS QUESTION AT THIS FIRST MEETING.)

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PAGE 02 VIENTI 02960 02 OF 02 111323Z

7. PHOUMI SAID THAT LAOS WAS A SMALL AND SPARSELY POPULATED COUNTRY AND THAT WITH A POLICY OF NEUTRALITY AND FRIENDSHIP FOR ALL COUNTRIES, IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE DEMOBILIZATION OF MANY SOLDIERS. I REPLIED THAT WE TOO BELIEVED THAT DEMOBILIZATION WAS DESIRABLE AND AT THE SAME TIME WERE MINDFUL OF THE NECESSITY OF DEMOBILIZING GRADUALLY IN ORDER TO PREVENT ECONOMIC DISLOCATION. PHOUMI SAID HE AGREED AND THAT HOPEFULLY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WOULD PROVIDE JOBS FOR THESE MEN. THEY MIGHT ALSO BE DEMOBILIZED IN A MANNER WHICH WOULD PERMIT THEM TO LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS BUT CONTINUE TO WORK ON NATIONAL PROJECTS. (COMMENT: I GOT THE IMPRESSION HE HAD SOME KIND OF WORK BRIGADE IN MIND.)

8. I SAID TO PHOUMI THAT OUR GOVERNMENT WAS VERY ACTIVE IN THE FIELDS OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PUBLIC WORKS AND REFUGEE CARE. I HOPED THAT WHEN HE HAD THE TIME, I COULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW VARIOUS AMERICAN PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES WITH HIM. I WISHED TO AVOID ANY MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF MY COUNTRY'S ROLE IN LAOS. PHOUMI REPLIED THAT HE WOULD BE MOST INTERESTED TO GET A GENERAL APPRECIATION OF AMERICAN ACTIVITIES AND HE LOOKED FORWARD TO WORKING CLOSELY WITH ME IN THE FUTURE. WE PARTED WITH MUTUAL EXPRESSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP AND GOOD-WILL AND HE ESCORTED ME TO MY CAR.

9. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH I HAD MET PHOUMI VONGICHIT BEFORE, THIS WAS OUR FIRST LONG CONVERSATION. HE HAS A VERY ENGAGING, QUIET, AVUNCULAR MANNER. HIS LOW VOICE, COURTESY AND APPEARANCE OF SINCERITY ARE DISARMING. PHOUMI GIVES EVERY INDICATION OF WISHING TO ABIDE BY A STRICT POLICY OF NEUTRALITY AND TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH US. THERE WERE OBVIOUSLY MANY LOOSE ENDS IN THE FOREGOING CONVERSATION. SINCE THIS WAS

A COURTESY CALL, I DID NOT WISH TO BEAR DOWN ON ANY PARTICULAR SUBJECT. THE FUTURE WILL REVEAL HOW TRULY HE ESPOUSES THE POSITIONS HE ENUNCIATES, BUT HE STRIKES ME AS A PERSON WITH WHOM ONE CAN DISCUSS SERIOUS

SECRET

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PAGE 03 VIENTI 02960 02 OF 02 111323Z

MATTERS IN A NON-POLEMICAL MANNER.  
WHITEHOUSE

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Draft Date:** 11 APR 1974  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** garlanwa  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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